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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WEBSTER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 8, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL WEBSTER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

HOUSE CONGRESSIONAL PAGES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, tonight is a very historic joint session of Congress. Indeed, it is unique in the history of our Nation.

Not because it was the first time a President's request had been refused by the Speaker. No. Or that the President's speech, in and of itself, is somehow going to be extraordinary, although we all hope that it is.

This event is historic because for the first time in two centuries, there will

be no young House pages in attendance when the President takes the podium behind me. There will be no sea of young men and women in blue blazers with bright faces intent on shaking the President's hand and drinking in the ceremony and the significance of a joint session of Congress.

This is sad on so many levels, especially as a symbol of why Congress is held in such low esteem. Many here understand the cost of a program but fail to understand its value.

Dedicated staff were dismissed without notice in a decision that was announced via press release without a chance for the people who care passionately about the program to argue for its future or help pay for it. It may save a few million dollars, but we lose the opportunity to enrich thousands of lives whose influence and contributions have spread across the decades and across America, while strengthening and uplifting this institution. This is part of a disturbing trend here in Congress, devaluing youth and civic education.

Also scheduled for elimination is the Classroom Law Project sponsored "We the People" program and the national high school Constitution competition that takes place every year all across the country. This is at a time when our friend, the esteemed documentary producer, Ken Burns, points out that the average teenager can name eight kinds of blue jeans but can't name eight American Presidents. Yet Federal support for civic education is not on the radar screen here in Washington, D.C.

This is not really any different than the other basic infrastructure that is falling victim to reckless budget knives and congressional indifference. The young people who participate in the page program and the Classroom Law Project could easily construct a path forward for this Congress and the President.

These young people would craft a path forward that featured a balanced

and fair revenue system that would raise revenue and reduce the deficit. They would accelerate health care reform, not put sand in the gears. They would right-size and redirect our military involvement, and they would reform agricultural programs to help more family farms and ranchers while saving money.

These alumni could figure it out, while those who control the levers of power in the House pursue an extreme agenda that is not what America needs or what Americans want. These young people, the pages, may not be in attendance here this evening, but their absence speaks volumes about political dysfunction and a shortsighted agenda.

I hope we will all listen to them.

CHIEF ENFORCER OF THE LAW OR CHIEF IGNORER OF THE LAW?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I come today to talk to you about something pretty basic—that is our Constitution, the way our Constitution was set up. We all learned in civics that this body, Congress, writes the laws for the people.

Down the street the Supreme Court interprets that law, they judge that law. And the executive branch is the branch of government that we expect through our Constitution to execute the law or enforce the law. In fact, our Constitution in article 2 states specifically about the President and gives the President a job and a duty that no other person in this country has under our Constitution.

Besides taking the oath to uphold the Constitution, article 2, section 3, says that the President shall "take care that the laws be faithfully executed", that the laws are in the hands of the President, and he is to take care that he fulfills his obligation to execute

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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